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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

experience. Moreover there is much in it to sadden us. For we see here traces of another aspect of the poet's dilemma.

Isolation is a dangerous thing for highly strung sensibilities. The violent change in the outlook of the main mass of the German people in the last few generations, the change from the outlook of the traditional poets to the outlook of the Crown Prince and the Handelsbank, has had disastrous results upon personalities too thin-skinned to adapt themselves, and neurosis is today a real danger, destroying the best brains in the country. We find this expressed in the plays of Wedekind, and no class is more affected by it than the *litterateurs*. In *Der Kondor* we have poems which are the expression of minds turned inward upon themselves, revolving in a vicious circle, as much out of touch with the root-springs of life as with modern German civilization. Poor ailing creatures, with pale fingers and sunken cheeks, voicing their obsessions in a café.

But over and above the main body of poets, who have succumbed to the equivocal position of the poet in modern German society, one or two men stand out who have overcome their difficulties. [To be concluded.]

Reginald H. Wilenski

FRENCH POETS AND THE WAR

How many young writers, how many poets, will be cut down by the war in the flower of their life. There has been a good deal of talk of Péguy, killed at the battle of the Marne, where he commanded a company as *officer de*

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réserves. He was admired by some and disliked by many. But, after recent events, he would have been destined to a considerable amount of fame, which would have found no opposers. It is one of the saddest things in these great contests between nations that the finest minds are dragged from their work-tables and thrown into the trenches—those minds whose work was desired by humanity like a benediction. I know one man whose life is in danger every day and whose death would leave me inconsolable.

But then, Sophocles was a soldier; Descartes was a soldier. Fate is not always disastrous. And though a man of forty may not have finished his work, he has laid the foundations and indicated its general scheme; everything is not lost for humanity. Much more pitiful are those who die like plants which have just flowered or only budded. Some of us cared for these young men whose deaths have brutally disappointed our hopes, and people ask each other what will remain of the younger generation after the war.

And what will be the spirit of the survivors after these days of danger and heroism? Will they hate or will they respect war? What souls will come through this test? It is perhaps too early to think of such questions, but time, though it passes in horror, passes all the same. It passes on the battle-fields and in peaceful meadows, it hovers on the same wing over dreaming towns and over towns engaged in daily work.

Yes, we may well ask ourselves, what will be the awakening from this nightmare? Economists and statisticians have

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calculated that the wounded world will need about five years in which to recover its health. Perhaps. But others think that the recovery will be quicker and that humanity, still stricken, will be suddenly seized with a furious desire for life. The world will not give itself a respite for convalescence. People will desire to live at any price, and to spend their scarcely recovered powers, while the grass covers the buried bodies. In minds as in the world there will be an unsuspected renewal of strength to which all will submit. Something stronger than death will arouse those who have escaped from death, and they will want to live twice, for themselves and for those who are no more. There will be everywhere a flowering of that plant, now practically abolished in the greater part of Europe—joy.

If it still flowers it is on the battle-fields, for those who hold back do not know it. If there is still gaiety in the world, it is under the shells and in the midst of the shrapnel. The soldiers one meets, who are coming back from the battle, or who have been wounded and healed and are returning, speak of these hours which seem to us so terrible, not indeed as pleasure parties but as hours profoundly moving because they are dangerous. I was listening to one the other day who, after some anecdotes about the life of an advanced out-post, concluded: "But I like it—it is something out of the ordinary." And he was returning to his regiment with an incredible joy.

I know that every soldier is not of so happy a disposition and that more than one is miserable in those murderous

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trenches where shells are the only visitors. But these are fewer than one imagines. In war the soldier becomes a fatalist. There are a number of Mohammedans among the allies, but all have become Mohammedans in fatalism and in contempt for danger. A second soul is grafted upon the everyday soul, an extraordinary soul upon the ordinary soul; and man becomes again what civilization has never been able to stamp out—a dangerous being for whom danger does not exist.

But, the peril once passed, he will take up with an inconceivable facility his habits as a civilized man, a man, that is to say, whose efforts are directed toward escaping from pain. I have myself seen, in a provincial hospital, a man wounded in the horrible battle at Charleroi (where there were so many killed that the bed of the Meuse was choked) show terror at the idea of an insignificant operation. This man who could not be held back during the fight and who rushed recklessly upon danger, had to be held down while a bullet was extracted from his arm.

During a battle the imagination has no time to work. A man is suddenly borne into surroundings which absorb and inspire him, while he blanches before a peril which he has had time to consider coldly. The best and happiest soldiers are the men without imagination. It is the same in ordinary life, which is also dangerous sometimes: imagination destroys the power for action.

It is for this reason that at this time I think above all of the poets, of the men of imagination, of the dreamers.

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They also make good soldiers, soldiers for the sake of duty, but they are more deserving of praise than the common people with their coarser brains, who only perceive evil at the moment they feel it themselves.

Remy de Gourmont

Translated by Richard Aldington

NOTE. The first number of the *Bulletin des Écrivains*, 1914-1915, printed privately, which I have just received, tells us that among the French writers who are actively at the front twenty have died on the battle-field, more than thirty have been wounded, and a certain number are in hospitals for illnesses contracted during service.

R. A.

REVIEWS

You and I, by Harriet Monroe. Macmillan.

Miss Monroe, both as editor and as creator, has done so much for the art of poetry, in the several capacities of encouraging beginners and by way of setting a high example in poetical production, that any volume of hers commands attention. *You and I* may continue something of her manner of style as it was shown in the *Columbian Ode*; but it also expresses her sympathy with the feeling of to-day. *The Hotel*, the initial poem in the book, makes one wish that she had given us more free verse. Her catholic attitude toward the revolutionists in verse, the Imagists and Futurists, is not a matter of liberal taste alone; it is a matter of genius for mingling perception and philosophy with a musical skill all her own. We wonder, with this poem before us, why she